How to / Trackmania / Mediatracker / Path Camera

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Introduction

The "Path Camera" looks like the little sister of the "Custom Camera", just offering a little less options.
Basically that's true, but there are 2 situations that are handled differently by the path cam.

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Download our PATH CAM test track. Open it in the track editor and record a Mediatracker Ghost. Then enter the "End Race" Mediatracker section.

Chapter 1 : AnchorRot

Surely you remember the Anchor Rotation option from the Custom Camera section.
I've prepared a comparison between Custom + Path Camera, dealing with AnchorRot.

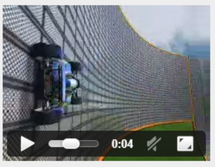
How Custom Camera deals with AnchorRot

No Target, Anchor Set, AnchorRot ON

CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

Target Set, Anchor Set, AnchorRot ON

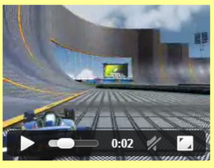
CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM



How Path Camera deals with AnchorRot

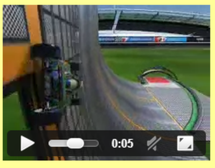
No Target, Anchor Set, AnchorRot ON

CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM



Target Set, Anchor Set, AnchorRot ON

CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM



The **3rd video**, Path Camera with just Anchor+AnchorRot (and **no Target**) is disfunctional. It simply doesn't work, I even had to set a Yaw of 90° to make the camera look at the car...

As soon as the "Target" is set, the AnchorRot starts to work, but with the typical drawbacks of a Target (Roll disabled).
Maybe it will be fixed with Trackmania Forever.

Conclusion
the path camera too much... Use it when you have easy tasks for a camera, the complicated ones are better dealt with by the Custom camera.

Chapter 2 : Camera Weight

Interpolation is not an issue with the Path camera. "Hermite" is set by default and can't be changed. But there is a way to influence the behaviour of the camera movement a bit.

Weight: 1

The "Left Tangent" and "Right Tangent" options are not available under the Path cam anyway, but instead the Path camera offers the "**Weight**" value, a nice little add-on for the "Hermite" automatic curve calculation.

You can take the term "Weight" literally, it describes the **weight of your camera**, for it will affect the intensity of the camera's curvy movements. The higher the weight is, the more protruding the curves will be... the results of changing the value are not too astonishing ^-.-^

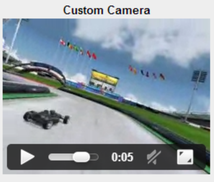
Chapter 3: The Path Cam advantage

Until now you've surely asked yourself why you would use this path cam anyway, if it has so many problems dealing with following driving action...
Well, the path cam wasn't made to attend driving action, it was made to create seamless and smooth movements when following keypoints on a -path-.

That means:
Whenever you add a keyframe to a Path cam block, Trackmania will automatically calculate a smooth movement between all keyframes, putting attention on **all attributes** the camera can have in position and behaviour... which is something, the custom camera isn't really good at.

Example:
This is the mediatracker content of the GPS example track. The only difference between the camera blocks is that one is a "Custom Cam" block and the other one is a "Path Cam" block. All values in the keyframes are exactly the same, but look at the difference of camera movement around the keyframes...

Custom Camera



Path camera

In addition, there's a little button called "**Smooth camera speed**" in the Timeline button line. This will re-calculate the smoothest possible camera speed between all keyframes in a block... a neat feature for even smoother movements...

Path camera is to be preferred whenever you make MT content for shooting videos!

Trackmania faces a special problem when trying to put computer generated animation into videos. Your game will usually run with somewhere between 40-100 frames per second. As soon as you shoot a video, the generated video will only have 25-30 frames per second and the Trackmania graphic engine isn't really intelligent enough to understand how to align the 25 or 30 "snapshots" it makes, with the camera action initiated by the mediatracker.

The result of that miscommunication is that, something might happen in the mediatracker content (for example a very quick camera move), but the video shooting engine will just fail to shoot this little piece of action, because it happened exactly between 2 snapshots... the result is a sort of "jerking".. not really a cool thing to have in a video...

Using the PATH CAMERA for all camera movements when editing a video replay will minimise this problem.

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